

Report on BC Environmental Technology Round Table Meeting of March 1, 2004
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1. Background

In 2003, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) launched an initiative to advance Western Canada's place as a world leader in the development, commercialization, use and export of environmental technologies. Over the period from April through November 2003, consultation sessions and regional focus groups were convened and regional assessment summary reports were undertaken. WD then facilitated a multi-stakeholder Environmental Technology Forum in order to build consensus between government and industry on the opportunities and actions necessary to strengthen environmental technology development in Western Canada.

This Western Canada Environmental Technology Forum was held December 5, 2003 in Vancouver. Anthea Jubb attended the Forum on behalf of APEGBC and her summary was circulated earlier. A summary report is also available from WD. The key theme of the Forum was to seize the opportunity for the west to show leadership by adopting a pan-western approach that is industry lead and demonstrates the value of regional input into national policy making.

Paul Martin addressed the Forum and challenged the participants to define their vision of a preferred industry/government partnership and to bring forward to government three or four concrete proposals in the context of the Western Canada becoming world leaders in environmental technology. It was noted that these proposals should have links to first nations partnerships, cities and urban infrastructure, health care and environmental technologies and an integrated energy strategy. These links have subsequently been echoed in the Throne Speech.

Breakout sessions at the Forum identified strategies for moving forward and brainstormed initiatives for regulatory and policy mechanisms, marketing strategy, fiscal initiatives, potential centres of excellence and demonstration projects. The next steps in the process were determined to be the use of local advisory groups to provide visioning and goal setting and to create regional action frameworks to identify demonstration projects. The primary outcomes of the Forum breakout sessions were to identify the key areas where the local advisory groups could focus their efforts.

Further background information is available on the website www.wd.gc.ca/innovation/etf

2. BC Environmental Technology Round Table

As the next step in the process, local advisory boards or Round Tables have been established in each of the western provinces to continue the action planning that was started at the December 5th Forum. These regional Round Tables are intended to be government / industry partnerships tasked with the following objectives:

- Completion of a regional strategy and action plan,
- Planning of up to 3 "Early Achievable Projects",
- Providing input to a pan-western response to the Prime Minister's challenge,
- Capacity assessment and planning for ongoing industry support,
- Preparation of an Environmental Technology communication strategy, and
- Reporting back to the December 2004 Environmental Technology Forum.

The British Columbia Environmental Technology Round Table is jointly chaired by Ardath Paxton Mann, Assistant Deputy Minister, WEDC, representing the government perspective and Rob Safrata, CEO of Novex Courier, representing the industry perspective.

The Round Table is intended to be industry lead. The WD's contribution includes links to political leaders, project support through existing mechanisms, interim secretariat support, and strategic alliances and leveraging. The partnership approach is intended to arrive at integrated solutions through collaborative decision making, to be accountable and transparent and to result in an enduring commitment to the vision.

3. March 1 Meeting of the BC ET Round Table

The first meeting of the BC Environmental Technology Round Table was held on March 1, 2004. Approximately 50 people were invited to participate. Attendees included representatives from environmental technology firms, associations, three levels of government, first nations organizations, university and research groups, the finance sector and utilities. Many of the attendees are recognized leaders and included Milton Wong, Chancellor of SFU, Mike Harcourt, Federal Cities Consultant to the Prime Minister, Johnny Carline, CAO of GVRD, Linda Thorstad of the Vancouver Economic Development Commission, Anton Kuipers of the Leading Edge BC and John MacDonald, Cofounder of Day4Energy.

Cathy Marr and Hiromi Matsui attended representing APEGBC as part of the industry associations sector. Charlene Easton, Senior Business Officer at WD, will be the WD point person for the BC Round Table.

This Round Table meeting was fairly fast paced and designed to leverage off the work already done at the December 5 Forum. From the discussions at the Forum, the following were identified as the four areas for which Action Teams should be established:

- Sustainable buildings and infrastructure,
- Alternative energy,
- Waste, waste-water and remediation, and
- Sustainability planning and enabling services.

After introductory remarks from each of the co-chairs and an overview of the timelines and process by Charlene Easton, the meeting attendees divided into four groups to identify Action Team tasks, resource and information needs and team membership. The Action Teams will be the working group level of the initiative and will be the mechanism for reaching agreements on targets, activities, roles and responsibilities, for leveraging support and for reporting progress. One objective of the Action Teams will be to inventory and select potential demonstration projects. It was noted that several key events define priority timelines for the demonstration projects: in particular, the World Urban Forum to be held in Vancouver in 2006 and the Winter Olympics in 2010.

The four groups provided brief reports back to the full group before the Round Table meeting wrapped up. Some of the key points that were reported were the need

- to enable technology that fits with market and municipal needs,
- to identify comprehensive projects that encompass a broad scope,
- to create risk reduction mechanisms,

- to look at what works in other jurisdictions, and
- to build on existing policies and approaches.

4. Next Steps

The BC Environmental Technology Round Table will meet on a quarterly basis to oversee the preparation of the BC contribution to a Western Canada Environmental Technology Forum that will be convened in the latter part of 2004. A key goal is to submit a pan-western response to the Prime Minister by the end of 2004.

The Round Table Executive Committee will meet as required to guide the effort with the first executive meeting scheduled for the third week of March. At this meeting, the Action Teams will be determined based on the feedback from the brainstorming sessions at the March 1 Round Table.

It is proposed that the Action Teams meet on a monthly basis for first half of the year and work toward preparing their recommendations for the Round Table by September. It was noted that, although there is sufficient representation on the Round Table itself, there is room for additional representation at the Action Team level.

I indicated to the organizers that APEGBC could likely provide representatives that could participate on several of these Action Teams. In particular, the APEGBC Environment Committee may want to put forward a representative for the Waste, Waste-Water, Remediation Action Team and the Sustainability Committee and/or LEED Task Force could participate on the Sustainable Buildings and Infrastructure Action Team. I believe that the BC Environmental Technology Round Table is a valuable initiative and that APEGBC should actively participate.